

I. INITIATIVES

A. Initiative Title

Develop guidelines to provide consistent, uniform, effective help desk functions, coordinated State-wide

B. Initiative Leader

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C. Summary

As the state moves to the delivery of electronic services both internally as well as externally clear communication between users and providers of services becomes more and more critical. Also the migration from mainframe host-based systems to distributed systems has dramatically increased the complexity of the state's business environment. Technological advances and the delivery of electronic services, while offering many new opportunities for improving the state's business processes and providing for increased citizen interaction with electronic government increases user frustration and heightens demand for quality support. One of the most important Systems Management Architecture components available to users of electronic government (e-government) to mitigate problems and resolve issues is the help desk. Today's Help-desk must function as a customer-oriented business driven service center. A strong help desk structure provides the user support necessary to build and sustain an effective e-government environment.

The service driven help desk concept needs to be implemented as a response to the increasing complexity of the distributed computing environment. It is focused on user support and driven by the business process rather than the associated computing environment. Web-based architectures, the framework for e-government, are easier than the mainframe for the average user to understand and operate; therefore web-based systems are used more and customer expectations are higher. However, the many integrated components of web-based systems

make it much more difficult for the average user to diagnose and solve his or her own problems. A customer should not have to determine if a problem is an application, the server, a network and/or hardware problem and then have to decide where to go for assistance. A constituency based help desk service should provide a single point of contact (SPOC) for that constituency, which automatically routes the service request to the appropriate resource. The first step to be taken in moving the state towards a services orientated constituency help desk approach is the formation of clear and concise guidelines to be applied state wide.

D. Description of the Initiative

The Goal of this initiative is to produce a set of guidelines to provide consistent, uniform, effective help desk functions, coordinated state-wide.

As the state moves to a broadly based e-government environment, its customer help desk support must continue to evolve. The first step in this process has to be the compilation of precise guidelines with a service driven focus. The guidelines should address the following components and concepts of a service oriented Help Desk:

- Driven by business needs.
- Centers on customer service.
- Staffed by career professionals.
- Uses state-of-the-art automated tools to record and track user requests for service.
- Builds knowledge bases of solutions to common problems.
- Empowers both support staff and customers.
- Fosters communication by sharing data and transferring requests among geographically dispersed locations.
- Collects and uses sophisticated metrics to avoid recurring problems.
- Performs the problem and resolution management functions.

It should also be noted that while state wide standards and guidelines for help desk operations focused on constituency groups is a good start, it should also be coupled with standards for platform architecture. This will facilitate a consistent level of customer service regardless of help desk location.

E. Participating Partners and Stakeholders

Agency service providers
Agency IT support organizations
CISD
Key Web personnel
User advocates such as
 La Library association
 PAR
 La Press Association

F. Benchmarking Partners and/or Best Practice References

Currently the state of Wisconsin seems to be the only other state striving to standardize their Help Desk functions. Research shows that at this time it is only in the planning stages.

(<http://www.state.wi.us/>)

Other areas where information on Help Desk standard can be found are :

The Help Desk Institute

(<HTTP://www.helpdeskinst.com/>)

Help Desk Automation Experts

(<http://www.helpdeskconsultant.com/>)

Help Desk 2000

(<http://www.helpdesk2000.org/>)

A summary of some of the Help Desk Industry Best Practices include:

Standardization

Standardization means making the computing environment as simple as possible given the complexity of the organization. With PCs, simplicity is having the least number of different operating systems , and software and hardware configurations. While in most cases, it is impossible to have a homogenous environment, the less complex, the easier to manage.

Designing to support an enterprise model

A single consolidated Tier-1 help desk supports an enterprise model. A consolidated help desk does not have to be physically located in one place.

However, it should have one constituency, one phone number, one set of procedures, one set of defined services, and one set of integrated network systems management (NSM) platforms and applications. Use of advanced technology tools, (including ACDs, Voicemail solutions, knowledgebases and self-healing technologies), to help improve responsiveness and results in user support.

Provide single point of contact

Each constituency based help desk unit must provide a single point of contact (SPOC). Help desk analysts must be empowered to take ownership of problems and given the tools to solve them. (Ownership would mean the operator owns the problem until resolved, no matter who is assigned to assist.) A SPOC minimizes user inconvenience and confusion. In its broadest sense, SPOC means that the end user makes one attempt at contact and the help desk request is channeled by some automated means to the organization that can best service the request. The help desk should mediate all problems.

Provide multiple levels of support

In order to leverage support resources and provide effective client support, multiple tiers or levels of client support are required.

Tier/Level 1 client support should have end-to-end responsibility for each client request. The help desk analyst should be empowered to resolve as many requests as possible. Tier 1 provides the client contact point (CCP) or call ownership, which is the single point of contact for the end user to request a service.

Tier/Level 2 client support provides advanced technical expertise to the tier/level 1 client contact points. Their responsibility is to analyze the requests routed to them and resolve the problems. Resources at this level can be composed of staff specialists and/or third party providers/vendors.

Tier/Level 3 support is composed of highly specialized technical experts. Calls which cannot be solved at tiers/levels 1 and 2 are routed to this level. Resources at this level can be composed of staff specialists and/or third-party providers/vendors.

Define reliable metrics and reports

Reliable metrics and reports must be defined and used to assist managers, help desk staff, and the client community to assess the effectiveness of the help desk in meeting organizational goals. Both consolidated high level and low level detailed measures are critical to successful service desk operations. Metrics should be used to identify trends and to support a proactive management approach that anticipates and avoids problems. Monitoring server information and trend analysis of performance statistics for comparing LAN operations generates important information necessary to remotely support many LANs. Methods and procedures to solve problems should be developed, published and followed and measured.

G. Assessment of Risks

The major risk associated with the creation of state wide guidelines for help desk functions is lack of participation by involved parties. In order for this initiative to be successful upper management buy-in and support will be essential.

II PROJECT INFORMATION

A. Project Description

To develop guidelines for user help desk functions to be used by various state Agencies to provide consistent service to internal and external state customers. The completed guidelines will be provided to the architect group for use in development of state-wide standards.

B. Technical/Conceptual Approach

1. Technology/Concept. The guidelines will be developed by a working group consisting of participants from several state agencies and organizations. This group will have diverse representation in their help desk background to insure coverage of all areas of state government. These participants will also be drawn from agencies which already maintain user help desks and will be individuals involved with their respective help desk operation and or start up.

The working group will include, at minimum:

- 2 representatives from Agencies which service internal customers.
- 2 representatives from Agencies which also service external customers.
- 2 representatives from Higher Education.
- 1 group leader

Technology such as a Listserve mailing list or a Web based discussion area will be established to facilitate communication between the working group members to accelerate the process.

Once the working group is formed they will be tasked with developing requirements, developing a model for help desk functions and finally producing documentation of findings.

2. Integration with Existing Technologies. The guidelines will be consistent with the architectures and standards developed as outcomes of Goal IV, Initiatives 1 and 3. The guidelines will also consider the migration issues of moving from existing help-desk environments to a new environment.

C. Implementation Approach

1. *Project Timetable:* The effort to complete the recommended Guidelines for Help Desk functions will require approximately 5 months. The working group will perform the following activities in development of the guidelines:
 - Review current help desk operations in Louisiana state government
 - Establish scope and requirements for the guidelines
 - Survey other state and industry best practices
 - Draft guidelines

- Obtain review and comment from stakeholders
 - Finalize and submit the recommended guidelines to be incorporated into the Architecture Group for IT standards, (Goal IV, Initiative 1)
2. *Project Resources:* Participation by members of current state staff.
 3. *Project Implementation.* The working group tasked with composing the guidelines must first be established. Once the working group has been established they will begin work on constructing guidelines through face to face meetings and electronic means.

D. Project Cost Estimate.

FUNDING REQUIRED

No dedicated staff is required for this project. Personnel from participating agencies and offices will staff the guidelines working group. Their personnel costs will be included in the budgets for their respective organizations.